

WILLIAM A. LITTLE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
LABOR ARCHIVES OF WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LIBRARIES SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

WILLIE ALLEN
BOARD MEMBER, CENTRAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

INTERVIEWEE: WILLIE ALLEN

INTERVIEWERS: WILLIAM LITTLE

SUBJECTS: CENTRAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION, RACISM, CAPITALISM, TYREE SCOTT, UNITED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ASSOCIATION

LOCATION: SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

DATE: DECEMBER 2, 1975

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 00:46:51

FILE NAME: AllenWillie_wauar_2610-003-Little_273_side1.mp3

The Labor Archives of Washington is committed to preserving the voices and stories of individuals who have contributed to the labor movement's rich history. The LAW presents oral history interviews as part of its contribution to helping curate and create access to a broad and inclusive historical record. These interviews contain the personal recollections and opinions of the individuals involved and, therefore, may contain language, ideas or stereotypes that are offensive or harmful to others.

Individual oral histories cannot serve as the sole source of historical information about an institution or event. These narratives do not represent the views of the Labor Archives of Washington, Libraries Special Collections, or the University of Washington, past or present.

[00:00:00] WILLIE ALLEN:

We did go through a formative stage. One of the things that a lot of people really don't understand, and, especially Black folks is because we just haven't been in it enough, is that, in dealing with the Central Contractors Association we're dealing with businessmen as compared to dealing with laborers or someone standing in line waiting on a job. So it becomes a lot more complex than if you're working in the labor market or in the social realm, because there's nothing have to be real compared to anything. In dealing with this, no matter how small a minority businessman is, he's still king of his own little mountain. What we had was a power struggle, and we were kept in a turmoil, and the turmoil was basically created by the Urban League, Model Cities, and the other people who had their own reasoning for keeping the minority contractors in a turmoil. Basically, because what we felt was that we had the nucleus to transcend procedures and stuff like that. In other words, this was where the aspect of the militancy come in. A lot of people talk bad, but it's very few that get out and TCB [take care of business], as people be talking about. In the contractors, there was that

nucleus that would do that, so we were able to use that as a vehicle. The social programs and other people would then come in and lock up the goodies, so to speak, and so it kept us in a turmoil, which was very difficult for a lot of people to see that this was structured.

There was also a punishment category because of the situation with Tyree, that a few people who had the ability of funding and stuff like that, so chose to punish. So we went through that stage. Model Cities set up a thing, a construction and industrial development thing, which was supposed to replace the CCA [Central Contractors Association] or was supposed to act as the fiscal management for Model Cities' monies that they were loaning to contractors. It was a dismal failure. We had no input into it. We had a 100% failure rate. Personnel was not qualified that was running it. It took total control of companies and had no vehicle for solutions. It was just a dismal failure.

When we were unable to get any type of relief from this thing, then it became apparent that we had to redirect our efforts in getting that control mechanism from over us because we did have a 100% failure rate.

A lot of people think that the social programs are the solution to minority problems, but we know it's not because we don't control the programs. That's one of the dangerous aspects. Anyway we cut it, we live in a capitalistic society that deals in profit and loss, and we don't think that the white man will ever allow a micro-system set up within his system to flourish without his direct control. So if we've got to deal with that, why don't we deal direct with the system at hand and try to change it rather than go through 3 or 4 different steps? So this is some of the thinking along that line, during that period of time. It was quite disheartening due to the fact that we were split considerably. As far as the board and the membership and stuff, it's almost different ideologies. From that came a sense that we didn't want any federal monies. We wanted to go direct to the system. We wanted to charge the industry that had the responsibility for creating such blatant segregation, blatant racism, stuff like that. We found strange bedfellows in Model Cities, the bonding industry, Model City, the white contractor, this type of thing. How could they be helping us with this system when they're serving the system? So we basically—

[00:05:15] WILLIAM LITTLE:

Departed company?

[00:05:16] WILLIE:

Yeah, we basically departed company and told them what they could do with their money, with that control. Because we were spending all of our time trying to get a few dollars out of them, rather than dealing with the problems at hand of the minority contractors. We also came to the understanding that that was designed, you know, let's take it there. So once we broke away from them and started dealing more or less on a national level. This was my movement into the organization as its president. We went for the national support. I think we were one of the first organizations, not one of the first on a national level, but one of the first organizations from this area that started screening this minority business enterprise, economic development, this type of thing, rather than the social structure elements. We ran into a heck of a problem with that in the beginning because people hate to see that. But again, we believe that a man will never give you more than he got. If I'm begging him to give me some, I can't never be an equal. But if it take off after him and get what's mine to make me competitive with him, then, according to my own abilities, I can rise. We believe in that, and we took off on that, and out of that came a more responsive movement, we feel.

Back in the days of 7172 Minority Contractor, came that response that let us in. We don't want to destroy the system. We want to make it responsive to our needs. In dealing with that, it caught the ears of a lot of

congressmen, a lot of senators. So we moved into what you call a national market, into which today we play a tremendous role in the minority business. We have testified a number of times to the Senate, the Congress, the president, other things concerning minority business. We were part of that big push to get minority business from off the back burner and get it in the front burner.

Now, we weren't necessarily for Richard Nixon. I personally thought he was one of the world's worst men, but at the same time, he was coming out with that philosophy.

[00:08:26] WILLIAM:

You're talking about Black capitalism.

[00:08:28] WILLIE:

Yeah, that's one of his philosophies, which were more for them. Just advisors telling them that this was necessary. Then, after he started having his own problem again, we were stuck on the back burner. But we have still pursued it and pushed it and everything because that's what we're directly related to.

Now, when you came out of the late 60s, '69, '70, '71, all the minority contractors were storing less than a million dollars. That's a year. A lot of people say, "Well, the militancy was this," but that can only play a role for so long. So as we moved into the political arenas that we had to be in, our contractors now are doing over \$40 million worth of work. And now that \$40 million, it's anticipated that 50% of those dollars rotate through this community. We have sponsored quite a few things. We spend quite a bit of money, like at the Heritage House to the Helen's local established thing. It's just natural, so not anything that the contractors are doing. But we're trying to emphasize that as we—

[00:09:50] WILLIAM:

Grow the community.

[00:09:52] WILLIE:

That's right. I think we can see that eventually we were able to pick up our own following from the lending institutions, the bonding companies, the procurement people, and stuff like that, with us fighting for our fair share. Well, it's just some people want to judge the past compared to the present or pre this, but I think it's an overall movement that, you know, you're into this arena and then you go on to this arena. Realistically, the thing that we're about now is not developing the organization as such, but developing individual contractors so that they can move on, because us sitting here becoming giant is not that answer. It's right back to the same thing we have fought against. So we do lowkey ourselves to a degree and take a lot of verbal abuse due to the fact that that is that movement. There is a movement to see a minority contractor get up in where he can get on the \$50, \$60 million job there. There's just that consensus to do that, and we're doing it. It's a slow process.

[00:11:19] WILLIAM:

Okay, let me backup a minute. My dissertation won't cover that much of the CCA. My primary concern, or interest, is related directly to the development of the CCA and the ideological problem within our CCA, how it split off, and one became part of the [inaudible] _____. UCWA [United Construction Workers Association] organizers organized the UCWA, and the CCA continued to deal with its own problems and began to stabilize

itself, and began to pursue contractors' interests as opposed to trying to relate to community interests. At that point in time, I want to split off and begin to focus on the CCA more.

[00:12:05] WILLIE

Okay. You want me to get more in-depth with what I was saying about the community and the militancy—

[00:12:09] WILLIAM:

Right. Because that's the dynamics. You had a problem because it was a contractor's organization in the beginning.

[00:12:17] WILLIAM:

The problem was it wasn't active. Lacked the contract organization. At some point in time, the contradiction caused certain problems. The contradiction in the organization just presented itself

[00:12:30] WILLIE:

Well, it wasn't natural.

You got to understand that there's a difference in social—See, we're not a socialist system. We're a capitalistic system. So it goes back to what we're talking about when we realized that socialism and capitalism had not made a merger, so to speak. Here we were trying to play with something as big as that, and we had not the resources, the bodies, the militancy, or nothing else to make that big of change in this industry because this industry is one of the most loosely regulated industries. It's the haven for every crook. Everything. This construction industry is a can of worms. We love it. It's like the gambling industry. It's somewhere you can go from rags to riches in with no formal anything other than knowing how to manipulate or whatever, right? It's an industry that's loved by—People that's in it, just love it. It's a code of ethics that is not on book. We use the word bidding and all that, but we know how crooked the industry is. We know that for every politician, they and every one of them has dealt with something to do with construction or related trades. So we know that all of this can seem, and now here's a social agency such as the Urban League, blah, blah, blah. It cannot teach me these things that they don't know because they're not telling us this. It's making me pure, cutting my nails, making me honest, making me all of the Johnny-Do-Gooder thing, and I get ate up over here. It's like taking a lion and taming him and all that, then putting him back out in the jungle. It doesn't work if you're not gonna to teach how to live, say, in Watts or Harlem or something. Then you can't teach me that by putting me in Broadmoor for five years with a fence around me, taking me, putting me back in there. It ain't finna be right.

So consequently, these are the problems that we started running into. What was happening, we found our energies going towards fighting one another, or fighting the Urban League, or fighting the Model Cities, or fighting this. Pretty soon it became apparent that we were fighting ideas that powers to be can't—

[00:14:57] WILLIAM:

How long it took for you to stabilize the organization? Once you took over—It was a point where Tyree left somewhere before the first of the year in '70. I think Tyree is out before January of '70. From January of '70 to June of '70, who ran the organization?

[00:15:15] WILLIE:

It was ran—tried to be ran by the board of directors. That was was seven people with no leadership, and the seven were fragmented. There were some believed in Tyree's philosophies or some that believed in the business philosophy. It was just a fragmentation of the organization without any leadership. We constantly heard from the industry that if you are going to bring that thing out of here, you've got to get it in the form of the way we do business. In other words, you've got to be able to deal within this structure, because we are not— See, you got a political structure within the construction industry already, which is AGC [Associated General Contractors], The Surety Underwriters Association, you got all these things—

[00:16:00] WILLIAM:

You got AGC.

[00:16:02] WILLIE:

Surety Underwriters, Seattle Master Builders, you got Mechanical Contractors Association, [? Yukon ?] National Electrical Contractors Association, Electrical Contractors Association, and you just got a whole maze of political organizations that are already out here that is not going to let nothing in here. They're not finna make any social changes, because they're form of socialism is donating to the church, to the UGN [United Good Neighbors]. We think that the white man deals with his social thing. Yes, he do, with money. He throws money at it, and through the money he throws at it, he controls it. It's just like Central Seattle Community Council Federation, where I'm on the board. When you say something, the banks don't like it, they go down to UGN, and UGN take the funding away. Now that's the white man's socialist system. But instead, we have black snakes that were making some changes and we're not making any changes. So this was beginning to bother us, and it was bothering us in the sense that we're fighting continuously. We're almost ready to shoot one another. We're almost ready to blow up buildings, all kinds of things, because there's people did not understand that what we were—Why this rock and this hard pan?

So what happened, when I came on the board, the first thing we done was—Bill Connolly was the director, and we eventually fired Bill. From firing Bill then I was the president at that time. It was asked, "Well, okay, you've done this now. Will you take the leadership role of it?" And by that, that meant like a director. In doing that, I thought that from talking with the national interest in Washington, D. C., and from talking with the local construction political structure, that this would be a three month, six month type of thing. Get together, hire a high dynamite director that serves the interests of the minority business and contractors, and this would be the solution. But what happens? The white men have a way of saying, "Okay, nigga, I'm dealing with you, with my money. You can't go nowhere because you—"

[00:18:24] WILLIAM:

[? I don't trust you ?]

[00:18:25] WILLIE:

Right. It's a very sick thing. What was happening is I'm moving [inaudible] _____. They always give you half of the thing, half of the pieces of the puzzle, and if you come on, we'll give you—It's like dropping the crumbs or chasing the carrot. You never catch it. From that we started dealing with the construction industry. At one time after we had shut down the city of Bellevue. We were so frustrated then that we just shut down everything that we could find.

[00:19:03] WILLIAM:

When was this? When this occurred?

[00:19:05] WILLIE:

Sometime in early January, in early 70s.

We ran everybody out of the area. We didn't have enough [inaudible] _____. Out of that, AGC finally came around and says, "We want a meeting with you," and Tyree says, "What do you want? What do you guys want?" Out of that, we told them what we wanted, as a lot of people thought we wanted money, we wanted this. All we wanted was credibility, because we lost so much credibility.

[00:19:39] WILLIAM:

In fighting for the workers?

[00:19:42] WILLIE:

Well, we never really fought the workers.

[00:19:44] WILLIAM:

For the workers.

[00:19:45] WILLIE:

Yeah. We fought for the workers, we fought for the Urban League, we fought for Model Cities, we fought for everyone. But now we're under thing of what are we really fighting for? And so this was the beginning of our direction. They came back, yes. Because, see, with credibility automatically raise money. If you got credibility you don't have no—

[00:20:08] WILLIAM:

Problem raising money.

[00:20:09] WILLIE:

Yeah, and all that kind of stuff, you see. We had always been told, because we were militant, and this is from a social structure, because we're militants, Urban League gotta be your fiscal controller and crap like that. It was very sick.

This is the beginning of the strengthening of the organization. From AGC saying yes, they begin to deal with that bonding. If we couldn't get a situation with the bonding company, rather than throwing money at the bonding company, like Model Cities thought was the answer, and get money from the bonding company, and picking one or two contractors. AGC then would have a meeting with the bonding company. Every bonding company would be there, and we'd go in and put down what we want. Now, this was in lieu of going to the street. We'll deal with this vehicle as long as it works.

If we had a problem with the bank, AGC would call a meeting of the bankers. We'd sit down, tell them what we want and how we wanted to work it. Sure, we ran into a lot of flags, sure there was a lot of dogfighting, but we were going to the top rather than somebody dealing for us.

[00:21:16] WILLIAM:

So, in other words, AGC was an advocate for the Central Contractors Association.

[00:21:21] WILLIE:

But when you say advocate, not really an advocate. They're saying that, "We recognize that you're here and you ain't going nowhere. We should minimize the cost and the conflict." So, consequently, that's what came about.

[00:21:31] WILLIAM:

But they still didn't have to. They could probably get a passive supporter as opposed to an active supporter.

[00:21:40] WILLIE:

We were directing what the support was. Again, that's what we said, that we want your credibility. Because if you give me a hundred thousand dollars, and the hundred thousand dollars is gone, and I can't—No, we just want your credibility. So, principally, we can call up on them anytime, and realistically use their political cloud or whatever I'm trying to do. But, in the meantime we built up our own political Credibility and clout from there, so that we don't necessarily have to use theirs.

[00:22:05] WILLIAM:

What I was trying to get at there is the fact that the AGC were very responsive. It wasn't the antagonistic force compared to the labor. Black businessmen didn't have the same problems as Black unions. Like the United Construction Workers, they didn't have the same problems.

[00:22:23] WILLIE:

That's true, we didn't.

[00:22:2] WILLIAM:

That's what I was trying to get at. He was very diligent, very responsive, right? It's a facilitated, an orderly process because of their cordial relationship.

Let me get back to another question, which I think I don't know if you'll date it or not.

Let me cut this off.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

[00:22:50] WILLIE:

Enough money for a contractor. They spread that out to go between 40 contractors. It wasn't enough money. Then, when they lumped the money, there was no collection mechanism. They set up dummy accounts at Liberty Bank that they controlled. They wrote the checks on. The contractor never has them. He never touched the money, but when it failed, it was his fault. It was the contractor's fault, but in essence, he couldn't do no more than what they allowed him to do. See what I'm saying? Now, when you look at that, and once you touched the money, you were in total control. You couldn't go to the bank, you couldn't go to the bonding. You couldn't do nothing unless they allowed you to do it.

Well they have a staff of three people trying to serve forty people, and most construction companies need a staff greater than that just to do his own thing. You said, "Thanks for the help," but at the same time, what was happening was these people did not have any construction experience. It was a can of worms. Yes, we were at fault to some degree, they're at fault to some degree, and everybody is at fault. How do you settle it? When one is saying, "I got to protect my credibility," the other is saying, "Damn your credibility. I got to protect my ass." All of a sudden Model Cities came out with over a million dollars that they had, but they wanted to take the bulk of contractors and run them around behind the \$30,000 something dollars that was available with, "Well, if he pay, I can loan you something." When, in essence, they want to take the million dollars and put it behind two people that they judge to be competent, and those two people lost a tremendous amount of money. It's just unbelievable how much money they lost. They were also trying to use the money for political control. In other words, you do this and we will give you the money. And then half of it was dealing with other contractors or things like this. It was a can of worms.

Now, irregardless of what Walter say and anyone else, we went to court. This had never came out because that's fighting, but we don't even want to be in that. All we wanted to do is be let alone, be let go from the social strains. We went to court, the tax courts, and everyone said that Model Cities owed money. They controlled the money. They had the money. We had to get the HUD [United States Department of Housing and Urban Development] to understand this. We had to get the city council to understand this. I just became a thing. We'll let you alone. Fine for that. We'll take the fall. We're the bad guys. We'll be the total assholes as long as we can move on because that ain't going nowhere no way. And so, that's what happened. Out of that came a lot of ill feelings that very few people really knew the underlying reasons behind it. Because, for instance, you cannot punish the movement. You just can't. It doesn't work. It's like you saying, "Well, I don't like the Panthers because of this guy went down and cussed out a policeman that been friendly to us," so you hold his funds or two people get in a fight.

[00:26:18] WILLIAM:

So what you suggesting is that, because Tyree was forced out of the organization, that the rest of the community wanted to bring some kind of sanction against the CCA.

[00:26:27] WILLIE:

Well, I won't say the rest of the community. I will say—

[00:26:30] WILLIAM:

I mean the rest of the leadership. The leadership of the organization.

[00:26:31] WILLIE:

I question some of the leadership, but yes, that's basically what I'm saying.

[00:26:35] WILLIAM:

But they ain't traditional leadership.

[00:26:37] WILLIE:

Yeah, but that's what I'm saying. Yes, that was true, but in essence we always had the support of the community. That's a beautiful thing. Rather than evaluating it as two people got in a fight, that was wrong. It was wrong for the fight. It was wrong for the challenging of the leadership. It was wrong. But what do you do? Do you kill a whole movement? Do you kill a whole movement that can generate the money that we generate?

While we're talking about funding a million and a half dollars there, so I see, to train fifty, sixty people, a hundred people. With that same exposure, you take forty contractors with an average employment of five to six people, five and a half people, and if they're working, add that up and add the dollars up.

You're talking about fighting the union. We're the only somebody that can people in the craft. I don't have to go. I don't have any union. Come on, man, you want to work for me. I pay him the money, but they got to take him in the union. So, you gotta evaluate all this. And, now, to stop this movement, they couldn't do it. How can you stop it?

[00:27:55] WILLIAM:

Okay, I understand it. I'm pretty sure they were trying to punish the organization. No doubt about it.

[00:27:59] WILLIE:

So here we come with that. So what we did was then said we can't do this, and we had our independent outside forces that evaluate these positions in each case. Even people that Walt Hunting paid \$80,000 to evaluate and set up structure came in and said that, "Hey, what you're finna do is finna get sued. You're finna get everybody in trouble. You can't control people the way that you're trying to control them, and that don't work."

[00:28:30] WILLIAM:

I see what your position is. Your position is that Walter—Well, Walter had good intentions, but the thing about his program wasn't really amenable to your kind of program. His philosophy wasn't really into what you're promoting, promoting contractor's interests. At that point in time, they only had a social welfare mentality.

[00:28:56] WILLIE:

If you were around in the 70s, you probably remember the situation where we picketed Liberty Bay.

[00:29:00] WILLIAM:

Yeah. I remember that.

[00:29:03] WILLIE:

People were calling us all kind of names. Why you picketing the bank? But we had moral support because at Liberty Bank you couldn't even come up with the deposit withdrawals and stuff like that that people were doing. The only thing we wanted from the bank was—When a Black contractor go downtown to borrow money from a white bank, the white bank tell him to come up to Liberty Bank because Liberty Bank got money for them. They telling Mr. Purnell or Liberty Bank is telling the white contractor, “Make them come through us because we're going to deal with just the good ones. We're going to stop the rip off artists, so make them come through us.”

[00:29:36] WILLIAM:

That's the point. We always get back to the same point: a certain amount of distrust within the community against the CCA. It's always through the same thread regardless of where it's coming from. It's the same type of thing that can be certain things people in community perceive against the CCA.

[00:29:53] WILLIE:

Okay, fine. If someone wants to take that position then here, let us take a position. Let us take a position. We'll destroy the bank. Once this came about, that this could be done—Because they're not as credible as anybody else, because you need your credibility to deal out here in life.

[00:30:10] WILLIAM:

Of course you do. What I'm saying is that the CCA lost a lot of credibility during '69. Well, not '69, but the middle of '70 and late—

[00:30:19] WILLIE:

Sure we did. So what do we do? Do we stop?

[00:30:21] WILLIAM:

No you don't stop. You have to prove yourself to the various people of the community that the rip off artist didn't have control of the organization, and you've gotta admit that there were certain rip off artists within the organization.

[00:30:36] WILLIE:

Sure. Just like there's certain ones in AGC. There's certain board structures of the Urban League that are incompetent. Model Cities had people ripping them—

[00:30:47] WILLIAM:

Okay, but think about when you say “incompetent” and “rip off artist.” A person may be incompetent—

[00:30:55] WILLIE:

In my years of running this organization, I have not saw the rip off artist. There have been accusations of it, there's been people accusing us of it, there's been all kinds of things that we have not saw to this degree. We

have saw an industry that, in a lot of cases, for the minority to make money, he better get it off the top in some instances. Now, that's a standard procedure if you're fortunate enough to do that.

When you look at some of the things that have happened in the community, such as lack of finished buildings and all that type of stuff, the people that was trying to be called rip off artists was the people that Model Cities and all the other people put all of their marbles behind. Because of the inhouse decisions and stuff that was brought about from this man. And so yes, we're dealing with him because he was destroying us. We were the one being ripped off. But that was from a political standpoint and not he was ripping them off. That was not the case. That was never the case. Yes, we could go along and say that that was true, but that wasn't true. Sure people contacted us about Cadillacs, but a Cadillac is bought out of your personal income. On a job or on a company, you get paid. You could go buy a \$20,000 sports car and nothing's said. You buy a Cadillac, there's people that are gonna judge you for that. I personally don't like Cadillacs because I don't like the car. But, at the same time, as long as the job is cost out right, as long as the man is making the money to buy the Cadillac, that's his business.

[00:32:47] WILLIAM:

But if then you begin to get some examples that somebody was buying a car or going to Vegas and buying materials for the job, and the person's employees aren't being paid because the person used all the money up buying materials for the job, and he couldn't complete the job. The person was filing bankruptcy and continued to open a new business. This lays it out. I can't call the people liars. I wasn't there. I wasn't part of the organization. I can't say this was the case myself, but I can document that other people have said this because I've taped every damn thing that I've got to protect my—

[00:33:32] WILLIE:

I'm agreeing with you that people are saying this. What I am saying, though, is that we did not find that to be the case. Now that's what I'm saying. No court of law found that to be true. I'm saying the tax people didn't find that to be true. The people who had investigatory powers didn't find that to be true. The banks didn't find that to be true. Nobody found it to be true except for people who had a reason to find it that way. I gave you some of the underlying facts. While they're playing with seventy thousand over here, they're playing with a million and a half bucks over here. In order to do that, without powers to be at city hall overlooking your shoulder or questioning your reasons for it, you make some fall guys.

Yes, there's people spends money. There's money flowing in this construction industry. It's the most loosely controlled industry out of anything. Matter of fact, at a legal seminar, Judge Horowitz was saying we could write binding contracts. The legal profession could write binding contracts. The legal profession could clean up the construction industry tomorrow, but they won't allow it. They won't allow it. This construction industry will never be cleaned up because of the mere fact that money flows through it. A large amount of money. Look at the bridge situation. That's case and point. Look at what happened to SOIC [Seattle Opportunities Industrialization Center]. It's the nature of this construction industry. So the damn thing that you gotta do is be damn sure that you don't be a victim because it will take you out. All you have to do is get one bad contract and they'll rip you off just like that. The same people who used to make these accusations are the same people that are now realizing that, if you don't have the power to change, you have the power to join and take it from within and protect yourself. Yes, there's rip off artists, and we can't change that because we don't have any policing powers, we don't have any licensing authorities, the whole bit.

When I mentioned a failure rate of 100%, this is what we're talking about. Every minority contractor that we had underneath those controls died. The minute we get rid of that, our failure rate is down to less than 5%. The

value had went up considerably. The employment went up considerably. So, I'm saying that these are the things that we have to judge on. We're funded by the Department of Congress Minority Business Enterprise. We're funded by the state, we're funded by the city. All these different funding sources for technical assistance. In this country, we were judged to be one of the best in the country. I'm only saying the judgement criteria, the counting criteria is there. If we stopped and dealt with them when they talked about what happened to Tyree, that's unfortunate. Tyree and I are very good friends. But hey, man, that was some force making us almost kill one another.

[00:36:59] WILLIAM:

I recognize that. The problem I have with this, this is all good information, but I can't use most of it because my dissertation, my interest, cuts off at the position when the organization starts stabilizing. I didn't want us taking in when Tyree was kicked out of the organization and follow Tyree to UCWA because it'll give a bad impression of what CCA was. I wanted to leave it with a more positive impression. That's when I tried really hard to get a hold of you because a lot of this stuff right here is fairly negative in terms of certain people in the CCA. You begin to see the concrete things it did. It made a hell of a lot of difference. It was the most we'll ever have in Seattle.

[00:37:41] WILLIE:

I never bought the concept that you could use the warrior and not serve his interests. I will never buy that.

[00:37:50] WILLIAM:

I'm not arguing that either.

[00:37:51] WILLIE:

I'm only saying that.

Some people thought, "Okay, I'll use the more militant role," and you go out there and get your head bashed in and move [inaudible] _____ and the good one, but the good one wasn't even on the line. I have no intentions of taking what somebody fought for and giving it to somebody else. I would never serve that interest. Our story is sort of complex.

[00:38:15] WILLIAM:

It's a complex organization. There was a lot of naivete in terms of what the organization could do. The leadership had a different ideology than the organization was designed for. So, in other words, the leadership had to be forced out. That's just obvious to me. In terms of doing that, in terms of the traditional values of Black folks, because they do have a set of social values.

[00:38:39] WILLIE:

We have a social need.

[00:38:40] WILLIAM:

We have a social value also, and that promotes what we do that sets the basis for our functioning in our society. All the organizations, the Urban League, NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], and the Model Cities program was all that same kind of organization, and it's propagated on a certain kind of philosophy. They're operating on that philosophy that can go and socialize progress in a way that white people socialize progress. You've got to have some conflicts up on the time.

[00:39:12] WILLIE:

The sad thing about the whole thing is that there's been a lot of different moves to try and take control of this organization. But the organization, no matter who controls it, now it will only serve the contractors' interests. You will not see any more of the militancy for the sake of militancy. Don't use us. Just like the last comfort. We have always stood right along UCWA and fought with them on their behalf. We were one of the most feared organizations because people thought they were dynamiting—It's just the nature that we were feared. We felt that our input—Like the college, we had a lot of people arrested in that incident. As a matter of fact, I was one of them. We've always fought alongside them. Then came the issue, the last issue that UCWA had that we didn't agree with. We didn't agree with the philosophy. We are forcing a man to get into compliance and to do this and to do that, from such a broad spectrum. If the man is in compliance, he's in compliance. If a man has done what he is supposed to do, he's done what he is supposed to do. I don't want to beat him because the system is wrong, because I know when we are limited in changing this system.

[00:40:38] WILLIAM:

So you take a reform type of position.

[00:40:40] WILLIE:

No, we just didn't take a position. We didn't do anything negative against it, but we didn't take a position as we normally have in the past. Like the church it doesn't— Everything that we asked the church to do, it didn't do everything. So when you then are after big corporations, go after the corporations because you're in an industry. That is one of the things that hurt UCWA very strongly. See, to shut down a job we used to have to go out risk injury and arrest and all this kind of stuff. We now just have to pick up a phone and say, "We want that job shut down," and it's shut down until there's some meeting of the minds as to what problems are. We've made our stride in the industry that we have to, which is not enough rest assured because it's still the most screwed thing in the world. I pull my punches about it. Unfortunately, that's where it do basically cut off because our whole philosophy was different after that.

When I became president and acting director, we changed our whole picture. We weren't interested in socialism anymore. Other than the mere fact that when we got some money, we'd donate money to Urban League, donate money to anybody because that's the way the industry do it. Not only because that's the way the industry do it, but that's the way that it should be done because we know who controls those agencies.

How in the hell can I go fight some contractor, you take a position from the Urban League, and still you are asking that same man for money? It's ridiculous.

[00:42:16] WILLIAM:

It's a contradiction.

[00:42:18] WILLIE:

It makes things very difficult.

So, we did change our philosophy. The things I mentioned on there is where we went. To date, we're self-serving. We're trying to get with policy. We're trying to get with laws. We're trying to get things in that will ensure our fair share. We're making [inaudible] _____. We feel that it's time in our organization for new leadership. We have a very strong board structure which they never had—This organization never had a strong board structure before. It always had a board that was self-serving. In other words, I'm on the board to get what I can get for me. I'm not sitting on the board to try to do what I can for the organization. If someone offered me a dime, yes, they're a bunch of crooks type of situation. Or, I won't say anything if you give me the contract as compared to him. It's a knowledge type of situation. We are just moving in that area where—

[00:43:23] WILLIAM:

Okay. I think that'll be enough to make the transition. It's because I don't know the take, and said what I said before was not correct. I want to say it was correct and that the infighting did occur, and the leader there didn't know— For the end of my dissertation, further research needs to be done on CCA all by itself.

[00:43:41] WILLIE:

Sure. We have some of the strongest support in the country today.

[00:43:47] WILLIAM:

National leadership, too?

[00:43:50] WILLIE:

It came about through the recognition of the militancy. Where, on the local level, the recognition of the militancy was just the opposite. They were used. Other areas of the construction industry, you can't do that, and the reason why you can't do that is because a lot of areas is Mafia-controlled. Where in the hell are you gonna learn to shut something down in New Jersey?

People are beginning to become complacent with the way things are, and we're not. We don't ask for support because if it's ours, and we make the money—Because every time we've asked for support, we owe it to them, which is right. Which is right. If we go to the street to get brothers to come help us—We're the only organization that stood strong and made sure that anything that come out of there goes towards those brothers, be it a job, because a lot of time young brothers come out and really help us. Really help us TCB. If they went to jail, we made sure they were out of jail. We footed all they're bills, got the legal people to—So deal with our own form of social responsibilities.

[00:45:03] WILLIAM:

Well, actually, it was something like a community type of thing. It wasn't just you, but it was the community also. You had a lot of elements. In the early days, the community was totally behind. You couldn't have anything, and then you were contracted. It was just like what's called apple pie and the American flag within the Black community.

[00:45:30] WILLIE:

I think we still feel very strongly.

[00:45:31] WILLIAM:

To what the UCWA did?

[00:45:32] WILLIE:

Oh sure. That's needed. It's needed so badly we can't have a problem with what they did in the end. That's out of our business. We run into more trouble with that than Carter has little pills.

[00:45:47] WILLIAM:

It's reminding me of back in the early 60s when the CCA was trying to represent workers. The union was saying, "How can a contractor represent the union?"

[00:45:56] WILLIE:

Do you know the things that we fight for over there with UCWA? The same things come back and kick somebody in the ass. Once we're in a union contract, we fight for this, we fight for that—We're bottom of the totem pole. It affects us first, and worse because we don't have the resources to fight. If we come up with a 5.2 minority employment situation on a job, we're the ones that have to do that. The whites can get away with it because they got the money. They got years on connery. We don't know how to falsify papers and things. The Davis Bacon Act, Prevailing Wage Act, kicks us in the ass. Worst damn thing in the world. Employing our own kids and stuff. We can't do that because of the things we fought for. Yes, the AGC is one political element, and the union's another political element. We're on this side.